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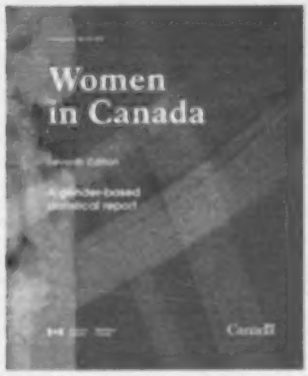
Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report

Families and Living Arrangements



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Families and Living Arrangements

Introduction

The majority of women and girls in Canada live in families although there is much diversity in their particular living arrangements. This chapter of *Women in Canada* begins with a brief overview of the family context and living arrangements of girls aged 14 and under but focuses primarily on those of women aged 15 and over.[1]

Topics to be examined include the conjugal status of women, that is, the extent to which women are in legal marriages or common-law unions, and whether these women in couples are opposite-sex or same-sex or include children in the home. In addition, trends related to women in stepfamilies, divorced or separated women and lone-mother families will be analysed. Other living arrangements of women, such as living alone, with relatives, or only with non-relatives will also be explored. Selected findings will be examined according to various characteristics of ethnocultural diversity, Aboriginal identity, age group and geography.[2] Finally, fertility patterns of women in this country will be presented, including changes in both the number of children per woman and the age of childbearing over the past century.

The family-related characteristics of women, as well as men, are affected by societal, legislative, economic and demographic changes, and in turn, their living arrangements have implications for areas such as housing, support and social networks and finances.

Large majority of girls live in family context

Most girls and boys in Canada live with one or both parents. In 2011, of the 2.7 million girls and 2.9 million boys aged 14 and under who lived in private households, the large majority—99.2% of both girls and boys—were children in a census family,[3] meaning that they lived with two parents, one parent or in a small number of cases, with grandparents only (Table 1). Specifically, about four in five girls aged 14 and under (79%) lived with couple parents in 2011: 63% lived with married parents and 16% lived with common-law parents. An additional 19% of girls lived with lone parents in 2011, predominantly with lone mothers (16%) and to a lesser extent with lone fathers (3.2%). Living arrangements were similar for boys.

Table 1
Distribution (number and percent) of girls and boys aged 14 and under by living arrangements, Canada, 2011

	Girls		Boys	
Living arrangement	**thousands**	**percent**	**thousands**	**percent**
All living arrangements	**2,726.6**	**100.0**	**2,860.6**	**100.0**
In a census family	**2,703.8**	**99.2**	**2,836.4**	**99.2**
With couple parents	2,167.5	79.5	2,276.8	79.6
With married parents	1,725.3	63.3	1,812.0	63.3
With common-law parents	442.2	16.2	464.8	16.2
With lone parents	521.7	19.1	544.2	19.0
With lone mother	433.7	15.9	443.0	15.5
With lone father	88.0	3.2	101.2	3.5
With grandparents only	14.7	0.5	15.4	0.5
Not in a census family	**22.7**	**0.8**	**24.2**	**0.8**
Foster child	14.1	0.5	15.5	0.5
Other not in a census family	8.7	0.3	8.7	0.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

1. In this chapter, the 2011 Census of Population and the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) are the primary data sources, and supplementary data come from the 2011 General Social Survey (GSS), as well as other sources. Data from the 2011 NHS and the 2011 GSS are based on the population in private households. Data from the 2011 Census are also based on the population in private households, with the exception of Box 1 on women and girls in collective dwellings which includes the population in collective dwellings.
2. Family and living arrangement patterns by ethnocultural diversity and Aboriginal identity will be explored in greater detail in other chapters of *Women in Canada*.
3. As part of the census family concept, 'children' refer to daughters and sons, regardless of age, who do not have their own married spouse, common-law partner or children in the same household.

Grandparents may also live with grandchildren, and in situations where parents, for a variety of reasons, may be unable or unavailable to care for their children, grandparents may take on a parental role. About 14,700 girls aged 14 and under lived with only grandparents and no parents in 2011, representing 0.5% of all girls in this age group. Some girls (7.8%) lived in multigenerational homes with parents as well as grandparents: 5.2% with two parents and grandparents and another 2.6% with one parent and grandparents.[4] Children in homes with grandparents present were proportionally more likely to have an Aboriginal identity, to belong to a visible minority group, particularly South Asian, to speak a non-official language most often in the home or to have a non-Christian religious affiliation compared with children who lived only with their parents.[5] Across Canada, Nunavut had the largest share of girls and boys living with grandparents (16% each of girls and boys) followed by British Columbia (12% each) and Ontario (10% each). Children may share a home with their grandparents for many reasons, such as cultural expectations, economic benefits, insufficient housing or a combination of these as well as other possibilities.

The remaining girls in private households (0.8% of girls aged 14 and under) lived outside of census families in 2011, primarily as foster children (0.5%), or with other relatives such as aunts or uncles (0.3%). Patterns were comparable for boys.

Box 1
Small share of women and girls live in collective dwellings

Most Canadians live in private households but a significant number across the country live in collective dwellings.[1] In total, 613,100 people in Canada lived in collective dwellings in 2011: 356,300 women and girls and 256,800 men and boys, accounting for 2.1% of the total female population and 1.6% of the total male population.

A small number of girls aged 14 and under, about 8,900, lived in collective dwellings in 2011, representing 0.3% of girls, the same share as for boys. The majority of these children resided in Hutterite colonies (61% of girls and 55% of boys in collective dwellings). Another 12% of girls in collective dwellings in 2011 lived in shelters, 11% lived in service collective dwellings, such as hotels, motels and other establishments with temporary accommodation services and 7.8% lived in health care and related facilities. For boys, the shares living in shelters, service collective dwellings, and health care and related facilities were equal in 2011, at 11% each.

About 347,400 women and 247,100 men aged 15 and over lived in some form of collective dwelling in 2011, representing 2.4% of women and 1.8% of men. There were large differences for women and men, however, in their representation in particular collective dwellings. Nearly 8 in 10 women (78%) in collective dwellings in 2011 were residents in one of three types of health care and related facilities (nursing home, 46%; residence for senior citizen, 28%; or hospital,[2] 4.0%), largely a function of their higher life expectancy compared with men. Less than half (47%) of men in collective dwellings were in these facilities (27%, 16% and 4.2%, respectively). From another perspective, among the population in these health-care and related facilities, 70% were women and 30% were men.

Conversely, men were far more likely to be over-represented in correctional or penal institutions compared with women. Fewer than 1,300 women were in a correctional or penal institution in 2011 (0.4% of women in collective dwellings) as were nearly 20,500 men (8.3% of men in collective dwellings).[3] Put another way, among the population aged 15 and over in correctional or penal institutions, 94% were men and about 6% were women.

Another 6,300 women (1.8% of women in collective dwellings) in 2011 lived in shelters, primarily in shelters for abused women and children, followed by those for persons lacking a fixed address and other shelters or lodging with assistance.[4] In contrast, 11,700 men (4.7% of men in collective dwellings) lived in shelters, with the majority in shelters for persons lacking a fixed address.

Owing to the greater longevity of women, a higher proportion of senior women than senior men were residents of collective dwellings in 2011 (10% of women aged 65 and over compared with 5.3% of men). In 2011, the proportion of women and men in collective dwellings increased with age from less than 2% each at age 65 to 69 to 48% of women and 34% of men at age 90 and over. Although even for this oldest age group, about half of women (52%) and two-thirds of men (66%) aged 90 and over still lived in a private household.

1. Persons in collective dwellings refer to the population in a dwelling of a commercial, institutional or communal nature, such as nursing homes or hospitals.
2. Includes general and specialty hospitals as well as chronic care and long-term care hospitals.
3. An additional 6.5% of women and 14% of men lived in group homes or institutions for the physically handicapped and treatment centres or group homes or institutions for people with psychiatric disorders or developmental disabilities.
4. According to the 2013 Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, over 33,300 women were victims of police-reported violent crime from a current or previous spouse or partner ("Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2013", *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X). More than 2,300 women resided in shelters on April 16, 2014 because of abuse by a current or former married spouse or common-law partner, according to the Transition Home Survey (Beattie, S. and H. Hutchins. 2015. "Shelters for abused women in Canada, 2014", *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X).

4. In total, 8.3% of girls aged 14 and under lived in homes which included their grandparents, with or without the presence of their parents.
5. For more information, see Milan, A., N. Laflamme and I. Wong. 2015. "Diversity of grandparents living with grandchildren", *Insights on Canadian Society*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X, April.

Close to 6 in 10 women are part of a couple

Similar to girls, the majority of women also live in a census family but generally in a different role. Most women aged 15 and over in 2011, as well as men—about 8 in 10 for each sex—lived in families either as part of a couple, as a lone parent or as a child. Close to 6 in 10 women (56%) and men (59%) lived as part of a couple in 2011 (Table 2).[6, 7] The overall share in couples changed little compared with 1981, when the proportions were 60% for women and 62% for men. There have been changes over time, however, in the particular conjugal status of women and men, that is, whether they are legally married or living in a common-law relationship.

Table 2
Distribution (number and percent) of women and men aged 15 and over by living arrangement, Canada, 2011

	Women			Men		
Living arrangement	Number	Distribution	Growth 2006 to 2011	Number	Distribution	Growth 2006 to 2011
	thousands	percent		thousands	percent	
All living arrangements	**13,976.5**	**100.0**	**6.6**	**13,293.3**	**100.0**	**7.2**
In a couple	7,856.0	56.2	5.0	7,867.7	59.2	5.1
With married spouse	6,291.9	45.0	3.1	6,296.0	47.4	3.1
With common-law partner	1,564.2	11.2	13.9	1,571.7	11.8	13.9
Lone parents	1,200.3	8.6	6.0	327.5	2.5	16.2
As children	1,987.3	14.2	6.2	2,443.8	18.4	4.1
With relatives[1]	403.5	2.9	11.9	285.4	2.1	16.3
With non-relatives only	535.1	3.8	24.9	689.9	5.2	25.1
Alone	1,994.3	14.3	8.1	1,679.1	12.6	13.3

1. Non-relatives may be present.
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2006 and 2011.

Most women in couples continue to choose marriage but there has been a shift over the past several decades toward increased participation in common-law unions. In 2011, of the 14 million women aged 15 and over, 45% lived with their married spouse and 11% lived with their common-law partner. In 1981, 56% of women lived with their married spouse and 3.8% lived with their common-law partner. For men, 47% were married spouses in 2011 and an additional 12% were common-law partners, compared with 58% and 3.9%, respectively, in 1981.

Being part of a common-law union is more prevalent in particular regions of Canada (Table 3). In 2011, Nunavut had the highest proportion of women in common-law unions (25%), and it was also relatively high in the Northwest Territories (20%) and Yukon (17%), even though in each of the territories the proportion of women in couples was slightly lower than the national average. The territories have both a proportionally larger Aboriginal population as well as a younger population than elsewhere in Canada, and each of these characteristics is associated with a greater tendency to be in a common-law union. The share of women in Quebec living with a common-law partner (21%) in 2011 was nearly twice as large as for Canada overall (11%). The popularity of common-law unions in Quebec evolved from the Quiet Revolution beginning in the 1960s[8]—reflecting changes that were occurring across Canada but were particularly salient in Quebec—that is, the declining influence of the church on family life, in combination with the growth of the women's movement and easier access to divorce. In 2011, about one-quarter of women in the Quebec census metropolitan areas (CMAs) of Québec (25%), Saguenay, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières (24% each) lived in common-law unions, as did 17% in Montréal. Trends were similar for men.

6. A small number of young women in their late teens reported being a legally married spouse.
7. The share of women in couples was larger for women living in rural areas (67%) than for those who did not (54%).
8. Péron, Y. 2003. "Du mariage obligatoire au mariage facultatif", in Piché, V. and C. Le Bourdais. *La démographie québécoise. Enjeux du XXIe siècle*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, article 3, p. 110 to 143.

Table 3
Distribution (percent) of living arrangements for women aged 15 and over, Canada, provinces, territories, census metropolitan areas and rural status, 2011

Place of residence	All living arrangements	In a couple			Lone parents	As children	With relatives[1]	With non-relatives only	Alone
		Total	With married spouse	With common-law partner					
	percent								
Canada	100.0	56.2	45.0	11.2	8.6	14.2	2.9	3.8	14.3
Provinces and territories									
Newfoundland and Labrador	100.0	60.8	51.5	9.3	8.9	12.6	2.7	3.0	12.1
Prince Edward Island	100.0	57.7	49.9	7.7	8.8	13.9	2.1	3.5	13.9
Nova Scotia	100.0	55.9	46.3	9.6	9.4	12.4	2.5	4.3	15.4
New Brunswick	100.0	58.8	47.5	11.2	9.0	11.9	2.4	3.7	14.2
Quebec	100.0	55.5	34.6	21.0	8.4	12.8	2.4	3.3	17.6
Ontario	100.0	55.5	48.3	7.3	9.0	16.0	3.2	3.5	12.7
Manitoba	100.0	56.1	48.0	8.1	9.0	14.3	2.9	3.0	14.8
Saskatchewan	100.0	57.8	49.1	8.7	8.8	12.3	2.4	3.8	14.9
Alberta	100.0	59.1	49.7	9.4	7.7	13.2	2.8	5.2	12.0
British Columbia	100.0	55.9	47.4	8.5	8.0	13.6	3.2	4.9	14.4
Yukon	100.0	54.0	36.9	17.2	10.1	12.3	2.9	5.9	14.8
Northwest Territories	100.0	54.9	34.9	20.1	11.0	15.7	3.5	5.3	9.6
Nunavut	100.0	54.0	29.4	24.6	15.1	17.7	4.5	2.9	5.8
Census metropolitan areas									
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador	100.0	55.2	45.6	9.6	9.7	13.8	3.1	4.9	13.3
Halifax, Nova Scotia	100.0	54.0	44.0	10.0	8.9	12.4	2.6	6.3	15.8
Moncton, New Brunswick	100.0	57.8	45.5	12.3	8.3	11.1	2.5	5.4	14.9
Saint John, New Brunswick	100.0	55.8	47.2	8.6	10.4	13.0	2.4	3.7	14.7
Saguenay, Quebec	100.0	60.0	35.9	24.1	7.0	11.7	1.9	2.3	16.9
Québec, Quebec	100.0	55.7	30.2	25.5	7.1	11.3	1.8	3.6	20.6
Sherbrooke, Quebec	100.0	54.7	30.8	23.8	7.7	10.9	1.7	3.9	21.2
Trois-Rivières, Quebec	100.0	53.9	30.3	23.6	8.4	11.0	2.0	3.5	21.2
Montréal, Quebec	100.0	52.4	35.3	17.1	9.2	14.1	2.8	3.7	17.8
Ottawa-Gatineau, Ontario/Quebec	100.0	54.8	43.4	11.4	8.5	14.2	2.7	4.5	15.3
Kingston, Ontario	100.0	55.1	45.2	9.9	8.4	12.5	2.2	5.4	16.4
Peterborough, Ontario	100.0	55.8	46.3	9.5	8.5	13.1	2.4	5.0	15.1
Oshawa, Ontario	100.0	57.1	48.4	8.7	10.0	17.1	2.9	3.0	10.0
Toronto, Ontario	100.0	53.0	47.9	5.2	9.5	18.1	4.3	3.9	11.2
Hamilton, Ontario	100.0	55.0	47.7	7.2	9.3	16.1	2.7	2.8	14.1
St. Catharines-Niagara, Ontario	100.0	55.0	47.2	7.8	9.6	14.5	2.4	3.2	15.3
Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, Ontario	100.0	57.6	49.4	8.1	8.7	15.4	2.7	3.7	12.0
Brantford, Ontario	100.0	56.2	46.6	9.6	10.4	15.1	2.4	2.7	13.2
Guelph, Ontario	100.0	57.1	48.4	8.7	8.0	14.0	2.7	4.8	13.4
London, Ontario	100.0	54.3	46.0	8.3	9.1	14.1	2.4	4.1	16.0
Windsor, Ontario	100.0	54.0	47.8	6.2	10.5	16.2	2.6	2.6	14.2
Barrie, Ontario	100.0	57.2	47.1	10.1	9.5	15.9	3.0	4.1	10.4
Greater Sudbury, Ontario	100.0	57.2	46.1	11.1	9.0	13.1	2.1	3.3	15.4
Thunder Bay, Ontario	100.0	54.0	44.9	9.1	9.6	14.1	2.1	3.0	17.1
Winnipeg, Manitoba	100.0	53.4	45.7	7.7	9.3	14.9	3.3	3.4	15.8
Regina, Saskatchewan	100.0	54.3	46.2	8.1	9.6	13.2	2.7	4.3	15.9
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	100.0	54.5	46.6	8.0	8.5	12.8	3.0	6.2	15.0
Calgary, Alberta	100.0	57.8	49.4	8.4	7.4	13.8	3.1	5.7	12.3
Edmonton, Alberta	100.0	56.6	47.8	8.8	8.3	13.9	3.2	5.3	12.7
Kelowna, British Columbia	100.0	57.8	48.8	9.0	7.5	11.2	2.4	5.8	15.3
Abbotsford-Mission, British Columbia	100.0	58.6	52.2	6.4	8.2	15.0	3.7	3.6	10.9
Vancouver, British Columbia	100.0	53.8	47.0	6.7	7.9	15.8	3.9	4.9	13.7
Victoria, British Columbia	100.0	53.2	43.3	9.9	7.6	10.5	2.5	6.6	19.6
Rural status									
Rural area	100.0	66.5	52.2	14.3	6.3	13.7	2.1	2.1	9.2
Not rural area	100.0	53.9	43.4	10.5	9.1	14.3	3.1	4.2	15.4

1. Non-relatives may be present.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Married spouses are generally older than common-law partners. The median age—the age at which half of the population is older and half is younger—of married women was 51.0 years in 2011, close to 13 years older than women in common-law unions, at 38.4 years (Table 4). Men in couples were slightly older than women. The median age for married men was 53.4 years in 2011 and for male common-law partners, it was 41.0 years.

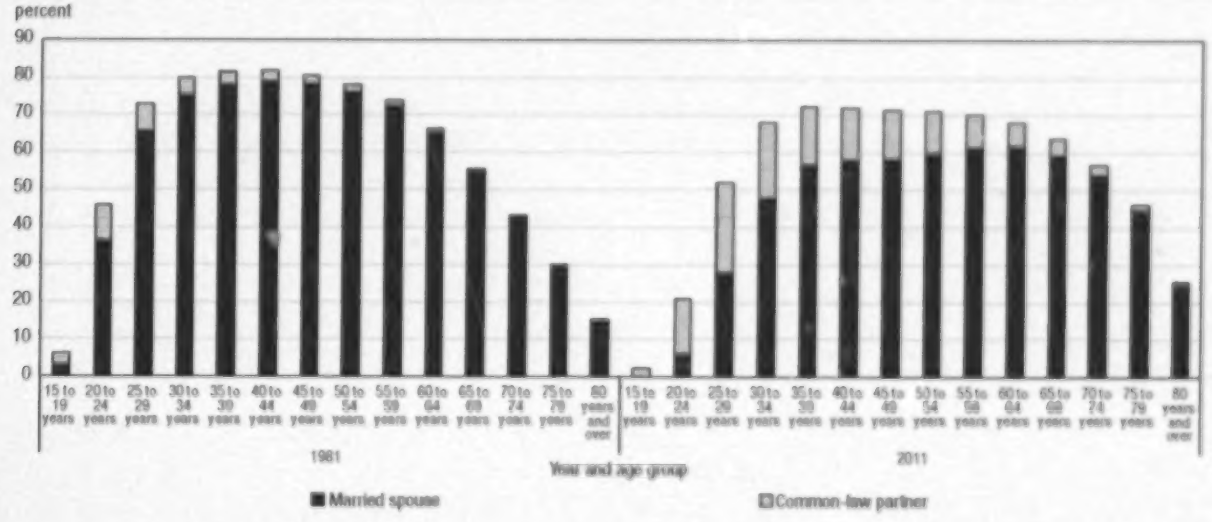
Table 4
Median age (years) by selected family status characteristics for women and men aged 15 and over, Canada, 2011

Family characteristic	Women	Men
	years	
Married spouse	51.0	53.4
Without children at home	60.8	63.3
With at least one child at home	44.5	47.1
Common-law partner	38.4	41.0
Without children at home	41.2	43.3
With at least one child at home	37.4	40.0
Opposite-sex spouse or partner	48.8	51.2
Same-sex spouse or partner	45.6	45.0
Parent in intact family	43.5	46.1
Parent or stepparent in simple stepfamily	44.9	47.5
Parent and/or stepparent in complex stepfamily	38.4	41.1
Lone parent	46.4	49.4
Never legally married	38.0	40.7
Divorced or separated[1]	47.3	50.3
Widowed	72.0	70.0
Living alone	61.9	58.4
Living with relatives	61.1	41.0
Living with non-relatives only	31.6	31.8

1. Includes married, spouse absent.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

The share of the population living common-law was largest in 2011 for women in their late twenties (24%). While the proportion of 25-to-29-year-old women living common-law was much higher in 2011 than three decades earlier (7.1%), the large decrease in the proportion of married women aged 25 to 29 from 66% in 1981 to 28% in 2011 resulted in an overall smaller share of women in couples in 2011 (Chart 1). The pattern was similar for men in this age group, but with lower proportions in couples in each year.

Chart 1
Proportion (percent) of women in couples by conjugal status and age group, Canada, 1981 and 2011



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 and 2011.

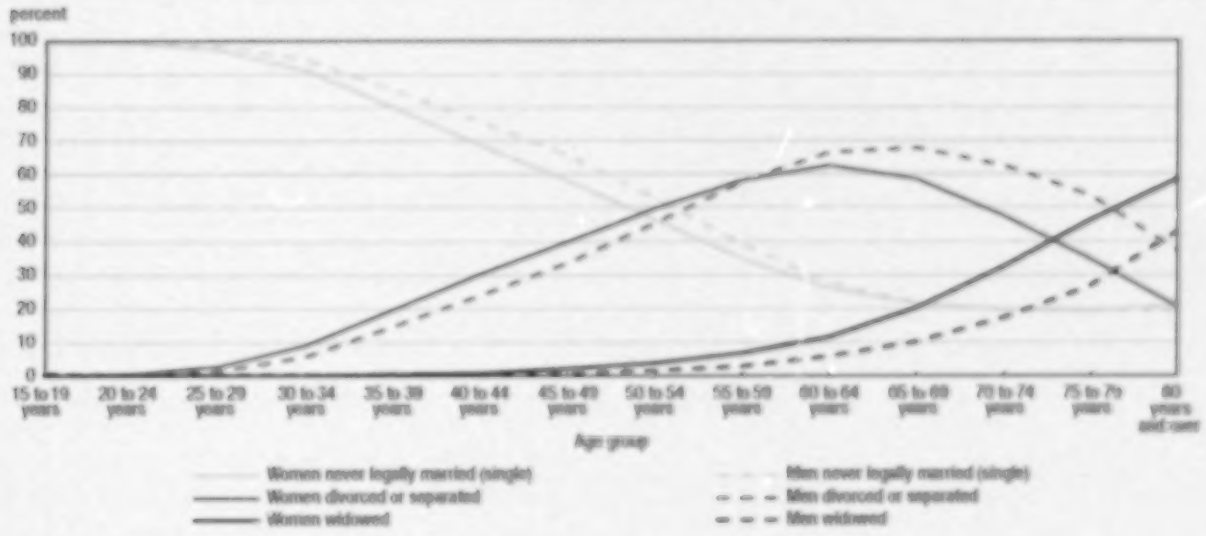
Beginning in 1996 and continuing to 2011, the majority of women and men aged 20 to 24 in couples chose common-law unions. A new trend may be emerging, however, regarding the conjugal status of young women and men in their early twenties. Specifically, the proportion of young women living with a common-law partner has dropped slightly from 16% in 2001 to 15% in 2011, the first decline following two decades of increase from 1981 to 2001 (the proportion for men decreased marginally from 9.9% to 8.9% during the same period). These young adults in their early twenties may delay becoming a spouse or partner in order to focus more on educational, employment or other goals. Future data will indicate whether this is indeed a new trend or whether it is simply a fluctuation.

Growth of common-law partners now more rapid for older women

Although most common-law partners are young and most women in couples from their mid-twenties onward are married spouses, women and men at older ages are increasingly part of common-law unions. As an indication of the shift of common-law partners to older ages, in 1981, 17% of female common-law partners were aged 40 or over increasing to close to half (47%) by 2011. Common-law unions are becoming more prevalent for women in their forties and over owing to numerous factors including more acceptance by older age groups as they may want to be part of a couple but without the formality of a legal marriage. In addition, common-law partners may 'age in place', that is, they grow older in unions that were formed while younger.

Among 50-to-54 year-olds, as an example, 1.7% of women were part of a common-law union in 1981, but by 2011 that proportion rose to 11%. For men in their early fifties, the proportions were 2.1% and 12%, in 1981 and 2011, respectively. The proportional increase for some age groups coincides with changes in the legal marital status of common-law partners. Among female common-law partners under age 50, the majority have a legal marital status of never married, although the particular share decreases with age (Chart 2). In contrast, about half of female common-law partners aged 50 to 54 in 2011 were divorced or separated from a previous marriage, a share which increased until their early sixties. To a lesser extent, the share of female common-law partners who had a legal marital status of widowed also begins to increase, particularly at age 60 and older.[9]

Chart 2
Distribution (percent) of common-law partners by legal marital status and sex, Canada, 2011

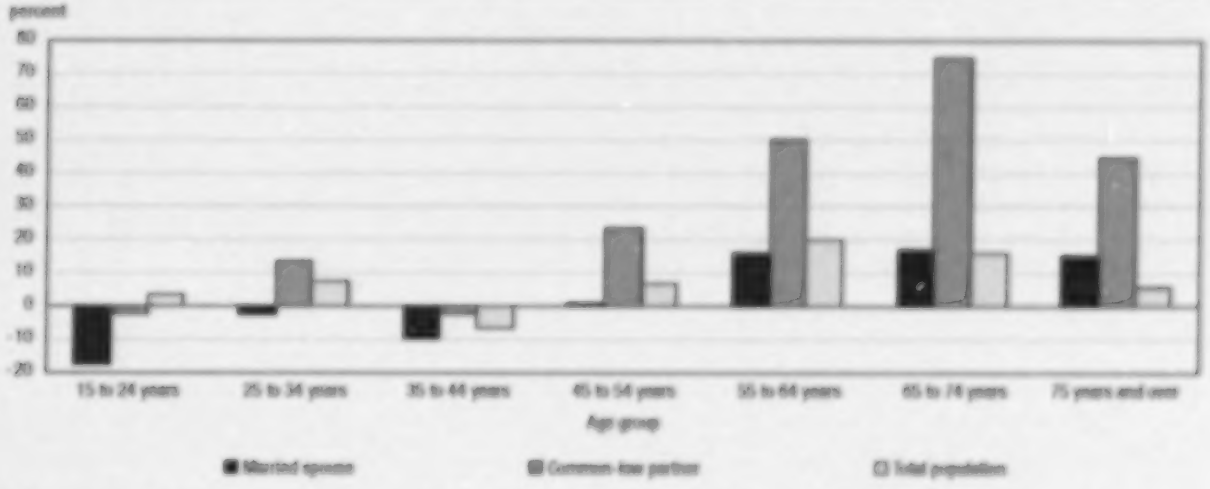


Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

9. While the pattern is similar for men who were common-law partners, the proportion that were divorced or separated exceeds never-married common-law partners at a slightly older ages but then peaks higher and at an older age compared to their female counterparts. In addition, the share of female common-law partners who were widowed begins rising at a younger age compared with men and peaks higher.

Between 2006 and 2011, the number of all married women grew (+3.1%), but growth was more rapid for women who were common-law partners (+14%). Partially accounting for this growth is that members of the large baby-boom cohort, born between 1946 and 1965, were aged 46 to 65 in 2011. For example, married women aged 55 to 64 grew 16% in the five years prior to 2011 while growth for female common-law partners in this age group was more than triple that pace at 50% (Chart 3). The most rapidly growing age group of female common-law partners, however, was 65 to 74 (+75%), indicating that other factors beyond the aging of the baby boomers are also influencing older women to choose this living arrangement. For men, growth of common-law partners was also most rapid for those aged 65 to 74 (+53%), but at a slower pace compared with women. In contrast, for women aged 35 to 44, there was a decline not only in the number of common-law partners and married spouses between 2006 and 2011 but also in the total population for this age group. These women were part of the smaller cohort which followed the large baby-boom cohort. Similarly, the number of spouses and partners among women aged 15 to 24 declined during the five years prior to 2011, although the overall population of women in this age group increased, supporting the possibility that there is a movement away from couplehood for young women.

Chart 3
Percentage growth of female common-law partners, female married spouses and the total female population[1] by age group, Canada, 2006 to 2011



1. Population in private households.
Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2006 and 2011.

According to the 2011 General Social Survey (GSS), about one-fifth (20%) of the population aged 15 and over had been part of more than one union—married or common-law—over the course of their lifetime with little difference between women and men under age 65.[10] For women aged 25 to 34, the share was 16%, and it remained relatively stable for women aged 35 to 64 at between 25% and 28%. The share then declined for those who were aged 65 to 74 (19% of women and 26% of men) and aged 75 and over (13% of women and 18% of men).

Growing number of women living as part of same-sex couples

Most women in couples are in opposite-sex relationships. Same-sex common-law unions were first counted in the 2001 Census at which time 30,400 women and 38,000 men reported being in these unions. Same-sex marriage was legalized in some provinces beginning in 2003 and across Canada in 2005. By 2011, 58,800 women were in same-sex couples (Table 5), of whom 39,800 were common-law partners and 19,000 were married spouses.[11] A smaller share of same-sex couples was female (45%) than male (55%) in 2011, with a similar pattern for both married and common-law couples. In total, women living in a same-sex union represented 0.7% of all women in couples in Canada in 2011, while the proportion of men in same-sex couples accounted for 0.9% of all men in couples.

10. According to the 2001 GSS, about 16% of the population aged 15 and over had been in more than one union.
11. There may be an overestimation of same-sex married couples in the 2011 Census. In total, there were 64,600 same-sex couples in Canada in 2011, of which 21,000 were married. The range of overestimation is between 0 and 4,500.

Table 5
Distribution (number and percent) of women and men in couples by conjugal status and opposite/same-sex status, Canada, 2011

	Women		Men	
Couple status	Number	percent	Number	percent
All couples	7,868.5	100.0	7,867.7	100.0
Same-sex	58.4	0.7	70.4	0.9
Married	19.0	0.2	23.1	0.3
Common-law	39.4	0.5	47.3	0.6
Opposite-sex	7,797.5	99.3	7,797.3	99.1
Married	6,273.9	79.8	6,273.6	79.7
Common-law	1,524.3	19.4	1,524.8	19.4

Note: There may be an overestimation of same-sex married couples in the 2011 Census. In total, there were 64,600 same-sex couples in Canada, of which 21,200 are married couples. The range of overestimation is between 0 and 4,600.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Women in same-sex couples were younger than those in opposite-sex couples with about one-quarter (25%) under the age of 35 in 2011 compared with one-fifth (20%) of women in opposite-sex couples. The share of women in same-sex couples who were aged 65 and over (5.2%) was about one-third that of women in opposite-sex couples who were in this age group (15%). The median age of women in same-sex couples was 45.6 years and for women in opposite-sex couples it was 46.8 years. For men, there was a wider spread in the median age, at 45.0 years and 51.2 years, for those in same-sex and opposite-sex couples, respectively.

Women, and especially men, in same-sex couples were proportionally more likely to live in the three largest CMAs of Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal. In 2011, 33% of all women and men in opposite-sex couples lived in these three CMAs, while for same-sex couples, it was 39% of women and even higher for men, at 51%.

Much diversity among women in couples

The prevalence of being part of a couple—and the particular conjugal status—varies according to women's characteristics, such as whether they reported an Aboriginal identity, were an immigrant or belonged to a visible minority[12] group.

Women who reported an Aboriginal identity[13] in 2011 were proportionally less likely to be in couples (47%) compared with non-Aboriginal women (67%). However, women with an Aboriginal identity were more likely to be in common-law unions (17%) than non-Aboriginal women (11%), and the proportion was highest for Inuit women (23%) followed by First Nations[14] (18%) and Métis (15%) women.[15]

About 6 in 10 (62%) immigrant women lived as part of a couple in 2011 as did 56% of non-immigrant women.[16,17] Immigrant women were more likely to be a married spouse, at 57%, than non-immigrant women (42%). The share of immigrant women living in a common-law relationship was about one-third (6.1%) that of non-immigrant women (13%). Immigrant women might already have been part of couples, particularly married couples, prior to entry into Canada, and may be coming from countries where common-law unions are less prevalent. Immigrant women are also older than non-immigrant women and therefore, would be more likely to be a married spouse than a common-law partner.

For both immigrant and non-immigrant women, the share in common-law unions in 2011 was largest in their late twenties, at 8.8% and 29%, respectively, while the share of married spouses accounted for 44% of immigrant women and 24% of non-immigrant women in this age group. Among women aged 25 to 29 who immigrated between 2006 and 2011, 7.2% were common-law partners while 62% were married spouses.[18]

12. The visible minority population is defined by the *Employment Equity Act* as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.
13. The term 'Aboriginal identity' refers to whether the person reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or having a Registered or Treaty Indian (registered under the *Indian Act* of Canada), and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the *Constitution Act, 1982*, section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
14. Respondents self-identified as 'First Nations (North American Indian)' on the 2011 NHS questionnaire. However, the term 'First Nations people' is used throughout this chapter.
15. Results for Inuit, First Nations and Métis women refer to those with a single identity.
16. The non-immigrant population is also often referred to as the Canadian-born population although it includes a small number of people born outside of Canada, for example, the children of Canadian diplomats born abroad.
17. Standardizing the age structure of immigrant women to that of non-immigrant women, the proportion of immigrant women in couples was 57% in 2011, indicating that the older age structure of immigrant women partially accounts for their higher proportion in couples.
18. For immigrant women in their late twenties in 2011 who arrived in Canada prior to 2006, 8.7% were common-law partners and 34% were married spouses.

In total, visible minority women were slightly less likely to be in couples (53%) than other women (57%), with the difference attributed to the lower proportion of visible minority women in common-law unions (3.9% compared with 13% for other women). In fact, the share of visible minority women who were married spouses was slightly higher (49%) than for women who did not belong to a visible minority group (44%). Among visible minority women, there were differences for particular groups: South Asian (63%) and Arab (61%) women were most likely to be in couples in 2011 while it was least likely for Black women (34%). Among women who were in couples, however, the highest proportions in common-law unions were for Latin American[1] (16%) and Black (15%) women and the lowest proportions were for West Asian, Arab and South Asian women (each at about 3% or less).

In 2011, 4.5% of women in couples were in mixed unions, that is, one member of a couple belonged to a visible minority group and the other did not, or both spouses and partners belonged to different visible minority groups. A decade earlier, in 2001, 3.1% of women were in mixed unions and in 2006 it was 3.8%. Between 2006 and 2011, women in mixed unions grew 24% compared with 4.6% for women not in mixed unions. This growth may be attributed to more opportunities to form relationships with those from different backgrounds as well as more people who belonged to visible minority groups, increasing the pool of potential spouses or partners.

As a whole, for those in couples, 17% of visible minority women and 14% of visible minority men were part of mixed unions in 2011, higher than the proportions for other women and men (2.0% and 2.7%, respectively). There were differences within particular visible minority groups, however, for example, 25% of Filipina women in couples were paired outside of their visible group in 2011, more than three times higher than the share for Filipino men (8.2%). In 2011, among Arab women and men in couples, 1 in 10 (9.8%) Arab women and about 2 in 10 Arab men (19%) were paired outside of their visible minority group. For Black women and men in couples, 2 in 10 (20%) women were in mixed unions in 2011 as were about 3 in 10 (29%) men. From another perspective, Filipinos (79%), Koreans (71%), Japanese (66%), Chinese (63%), Southeast Asians (60%) and Latin Americans (55%) in mixed unions were proportionally more likely to be women, while South Asians (47%), West Asians (40%), Blacks (37%), or Arabs (32%) were proportionally less likely to be women.

Over half of married women have children at home

Just over half (54%) of married women had at least one child at home in 2011 as did 45% of women in common-law unions. The remainder, 46% and 55%, respectively, did not have children at home, either because they never had children or because their children—who might be adults with their own independent households—lived elsewhere.

Women and men with children at home who were married spouses are older, on average, compared with those who were common-law partners. The median age of married women with children was 44.5 years in 2011 and for women in common-law unions, it was 37.4 years. For men, the median age of married spouses with children was 47.1 years and for common-law partners, it was 40.0 years. Consistent with their older ages, a higher proportion of married women had children all aged 25 and over at home, 6.4%, than did common-law women, 1.4%. Exchanges of economic, emotional and functional support may flow in both directions between parents and adult children when they share a home, producing different family dynamics than among families with young children.

Married couples were also proportionally more likely to have larger families and less likely to have all children of pre-school age compared with common-law couples. Among married couples with children at home in 2011, 38% had one child, 43% had two children and 19% had three children or more. Closer to half of common-law couples (46%) had one child at home, 39% had two children and 15% had three or more. While 17% of married couples with children had children all aged five and under, this was nearly double for common-law couples at 32%.

In 2011, women in opposite-sex couples were far more likely to have children at home than women in same-sex couples, 53% and 17%, respectively. Female same-sex couples, however, were over four times more likely to have children (17%) than male same-sex couples (3.8%). In total, about four-fifths (79%) of all same-sex couples with children were female couples.

1. About 24% of Latin American women were in couples, marginally higher than visible minority women overall, but lower by 14 for non-visible minority women.

Women less likely than men to be stepparent

Couple families with children at home may be classified as intact families or stepfamilies, which, in turn, may be classified as simple stepfamilies or complex stepfamilies.[1] Of the 4.1 million women who were part of couples living with children[2] in 2011, 89% were mothers in intact families while 12% were mothers or stepmothers in stepfamilies, the same proportions as for men (Table 4).

Table 4
Distribution (number and percent) of women and men in couples with children by stepfamily status, Canada, 2011

	Women		Men	
In couple with children	Number	percent	Number	percent
All parents in couples	3,113,0	100.0	3,138,0	100.0
Parent in intact family[1]	2,800,0	87.6	2,798,0	89.1
Parent and/or stepparent in stepfamily	310,0	12.4	340,0	10.9
Parent or stepparent in simple stepfamily	256,0	8.2	313,0	7.8
Parent in simple stepfamily	219,0	6.9	96,1	3.0
Stepparent in simple stepfamily	36,9	1.4	217,9	6.9
Parent and/or stepparent in complex stepfamily	268,3	8.7	268,7	8.7
Parent in common children and own children in complex stepfamily	170,0	5.6	30,0	0.9
Both parent and stepparent in complex stepfamily	29,9	1.0	238,7	7.6

1. Refers to both of legal and child for whom it cannot be determined if there are stepchildren present and considered intact families.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Populations, 2011.

Of the 510,240 women in stepfamilies, 60% had only their biological or adopted children in the home, 16% had only the children of their spouse or partner, and 15% had both their biological or adopted children as well as those of their spouse or partner. Women are more likely than men to have and retain custody of their children. Therefore, not only are women more likely than men to be lone parents, they are also more likely to bring their biological or adopted children into a stepfamily situation. Consequently, of the 536,830 men in stepfamilies, 36% had only their biological or adopted children in the home, 43% had only the children of their spouse or partner and 21% had both their biological or adopted children as well as those of their spouse or partner.[3]

The majority of women and men in intact families in 2011 were married spouses (57%) and the remainder were common-law partners (43%). Among women who had only their biological or adopted children in a simple stepfamily,[4] 63% were married spouses and 33% were common-law partners. Conversely, when women were in a simple stepfamily with only the children of their spouse or partner,[5] 57% were married spouses and 43% were common-law partners. Being part of a common-law couple may be the result of either choice or constraint as it may not be possible to legally marry if one member of the couple has not finalized a divorce from a previous spouse.

The results for men were essentially a mirror image of those for women: when men were in a simple stepfamily with only the biological or adopted children of their spouse or partner, they were less likely to be a married spouse (65%) than a common-law partner (33%) but when the simple stepfamily contained only the man's children, these men were more likely to be married spouses (58%) than common-law partners (42%). In sum, a smaller share of women in simple stepfamilies with only their children present were married spouses than were common-law partners but the opposite effect occurs for men.

Women and men in complex stepfamilies, however, were more likely to be part of married couples than of common-law unions when a biological or adopted child of both parents was involved. In contrast, women and men were more likely to be common-law partners than married spouses in complex stepfamilies where there was no common child.

Women in complex stepfamilies had a younger median age (38.4 years) in 2011 compared with women either in simple stepfamilies (44.9 years) or in intact families (43.5 years). The median age of mothers was younger than that of fathers across all couple families, although the pattern was similar for both.

1. Intact family: A couple family in which all children in the household are the biological and/or adopted children of both members of the couple.
Stepfamily: A couple family in which at least one child is the biological or adopted child of only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship. Couples with children for whom it cannot be determined if there are stepchildren present are considered intact families.
Simple stepfamily: A stepfamily in which all children are the biological or adoption children of one and only one married spouse or common-law partner and whose birth or adoption preceded the current relationship.
Complex stepfamily: There are three types of complex stepfamilies: First, a couple family in which there is at least one child of both parents and at least one child of only one parent. Secondly, a couple family in which there is at least one child of each parent and no children of both parents. Third, a couple family in which there is at least one child of both parents and at least one child of each parent.
2. In total, there were 1,115,250 stepchildren in 2011, accounting for 4.9% of persons who were in couples with children. In comparison, 0.3% of men in couples with children were stepchildren. About 0.3% of persons who were in couples with children were stepchildren in a simple stepfamily compared with 0.3% of men who were stepchildren and 1.4% of persons were both children and stepchildren in a complex stepfamily, as were 3.3% of men who were fathers as well as stepfathers in a complex stepfamily.
3. Meaning the family was comprised of a woman, her biological or adopted children from a previous union, and the woman's spouse or partner.
4. Meaning the family was comprised of a woman, her spouse or partner, and the biological or adopted children of her spouse or partner from a previous union.

Larger share of divorced or separated women in their fifties and older

Based on 2011 GSS data, about five million individuals had divorced or separated sometime in the 20 years prior to the survey. Closer to half (49%) of these individuals ended a common-law union, 44% terminated a legal marriage, and a small proportion (7%) dissolved both a common-law union and a legal marriage.[1,2]

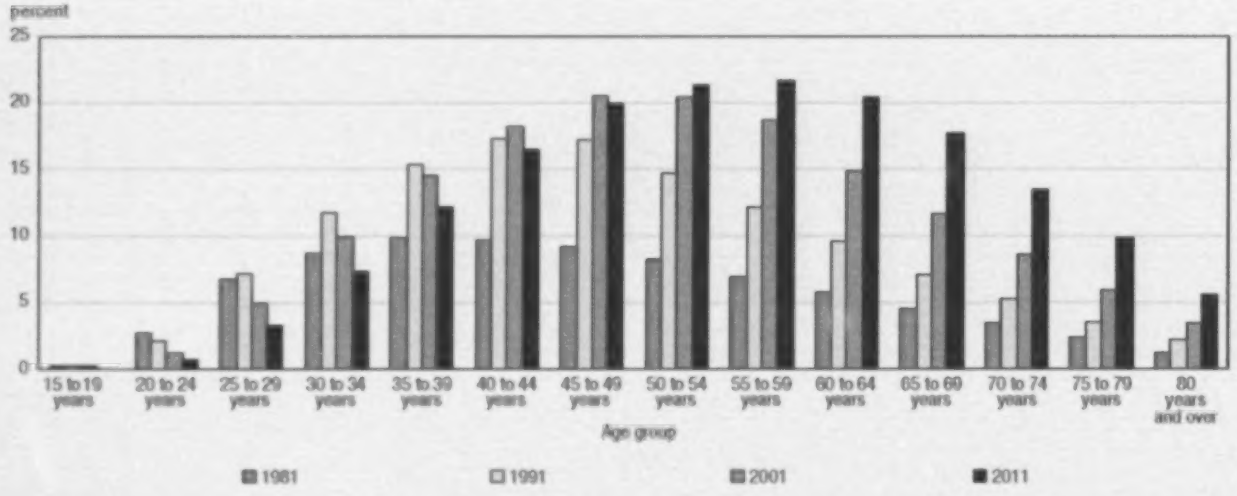
Census data can be used to examine trends in the proportions of women and men with a legal marital status of divorced or separated, meaning that they had divorced or separated from a legal marriage at some earlier point in their lives and had not remarried.[3] During the past 30 years, the share of women aged 15 and over that were divorced or separated more than doubled from 3.8% in 1981 to 12% in 2011 and from 4.3% to 10% for men during these years. Divorce became more common with the introduction of the 1968 *Divorce Act*, which established no-fault divorce after a period of separation of three years or more. There was a large increase in the number of divorces following this legislation, and again in the late 1980s with the 1986 *Divorce Act* amendment reducing the minimum separation period to one year.

In the last 10 years, however, there has been a declining trend in the share of women and men under age 50 that were divorced or separated. The drop began even earlier for some age groups, for instance, 16% of women in their late thirties were divorced or separated in 1996, falling to 12% in 2011. For men in this age group, the shares fell from 12% to 8.3% between 1996 and 2011.[4] Among the reasons for a lower proportion of the population under age 50 that was divorced or separated include a decreasing proportion of legally married young adults and an increasing proportion of the never-married population, many of whom choose to form common-law unions.

For women at age 50 and over, however, the proportion that had been previously divorced or separated and had not remarried has been increasing and is now highest for women in their late fifties (Chart 4). More than one-fifth (21%) of women aged 55 to 59 in 2011 were divorced or separated (as were 19% of men), more than three times the share of the age group in 1981 (6.8% (and 5.8% of men). In 1981, the largest share of women that were divorced or separated was in their late thirties and early forties (close to 10%) while for men the proportion was highest during their forties and early fifties (about 7%). Among the divorced or separated population, the dissolution of the relationship might actually have occurred much earlier in life. For example, for the population aged 50 and over in 2011, whose first marriage ended in divorce, the relationship dissolved on average for women at age 40.2 years and for men at 37.8 years.[5] Additionally, women and men who do not marry again continue to have a legal marital status of divorced or separated, even those who live in a common-law union.

1. Vanier, M. 2013. "Parenting and child support after separation or divorce". *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-652-X.
2. The equivalent proportion in the 2011 GSS was smaller those both legally separated and those separated from a common-law union while in census data, a client is being separated from a legal marriage. For more discussion on comparing separation and divorce in Canada, see Vanier, M. 2013. "Parenting and child support after separation or divorce". *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-652-X.
3. Individuals with a legal marital status of divorced or separated (data 40's dating, even if they have a subsequent common-law union. (There was a subsequent legal marriage, the legal marital status of individuals would become legally married by the duration of their marriage.
4. Milan, A. 2013. *Marital Status: Overview, 2011*. Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-209-X.
5. Wu, Z., J. Wang and M. Baer. 2013. "Changing trends in living arrangements and unequal access for current and future seniors". *Insights on Canadian Society*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X.

Chart 4
Proportion (percent) of women[1] with a legal marital status of divorced or separated by age group, Canada, 1981 to 2011



1. Population in private households.
Note: In 1981, the divorced and separated population excludes common-law partners whose legal marital status was divorced or separated.
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

One-quarter of divorced or separated parents had children aged 18 or younger

As the legal dissolution of a marriage, divorce may involve other family-related issues including support, division of property, access to children and custody of children. These issues are often covered with a separation agreement and do not require going to court if the application for the legal divorce is uncontested.

Close to 4 in 10 (38%) divorced or separated individuals had a child together at the time of their separation or divorce, according to the 2011 GSS, with one-quarter (24%) having at least one child aged 18 years or younger.[29, 30] As there are more people married than living common-law, and as more children are born to married parents than to common-law parents, dissolutions from legal marriages were nearly twice as likely as those from common-law unions to involve children aged 18 years or younger. Three in 10 (30%) individuals separated or divorced from a legal marriage had a child with their former spouse or partner compared with 17% of separated common-law couples.

The majority of divorced or separated Canadians had written agreements regarding child-related issues, according to the 2011 GSS, and others had only a verbal arrangement or no arrangement at all on child-related issues such as primary residence, time spent with children or child support. Among those individuals with written agreements, some prepared them with the assistance of a lawyer or on their own, while others made use of family justice services such as mediation and alternative dispute resolution. Regarding the primary residence of child—that is, where the child lives most of the time—59% of divorced or separated Canadians with children aged 18 or under had a written arrangement, an additional 32% had a verbal arrangement and 9% had no arrangement at all.[31]

According to the 2011 GSS, most (70%) divorced and separated parents who were asked about the primary residence of the child reported that the child lived primarily with his or her mother.[32] An additional 15% of parents reported the child lived mainly with the father, 9% reported equal living time between the two parents' homes and about 6% indicated that there were other arrangements.[33]

Close to two-thirds (64%) of parents who did not live with their child reported in the 2011 GSS that they were paying child support at the time of the survey, with the majority being fathers (92%). Child support payments were also

29. Sinha, M. 2014. "Parenting and child support after separation or divorce", *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-652-X.
30. 2011 GSS analysis in this section is based on parents with one or more children (aged 18 years and under at the time of the survey), who do not all live at the same primary residence and who separated or divorced within the last 20 years.
31. Allen, M. 2013. "Profile of child-related family law cases in civil court, 2011/2012", *Juristat*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X.
32. Divorced and separated parents were not specifically asked, however, about the custody arrangements for their children.
33. Statistics Canada. 2012. "Table 18: Distribution of separated or divorced parents, by primary residence of their children", *2011 General Social Survey: Overview of Families in Canada – Selected Tables on Families in Canada*, Catalogue no. 89-650-X, no. 1.

reported by about one-fifth (19%) of parents whose child spent equal amounts of time with each parent. Conversely, child support was received by 41% of resident parents, 93% of whom were mothers.[34, 35]

According to the 2013/2014 Civil Court Survey,[36, 37] about 313,200 civil court cases were family cases, of which close to 37% involved divorce cases (Table 7). The majority of divorce cases were uncontested with no other issues identified. Specifically, two-thirds (66%) of the 114,900 divorce cases in 2013/2014 had no identified issues of access, custody or support while the remaining (34%) did have such issues. In addition, about 3 in 10 (29%) other family cases were also related to access, custody and/or support.[38]

Table 7
Distribution (number and percent) of active civil court family cases by type, Canada, 2013/2014

Type of civil court case	Number thousands	Distribution percent
Total family cases	**313.2**	**100.0**
Child protection cases	**31.8**	**10.2**
Divorce cases	**114.9**	**36.7**
Divorce cases with no issue(s) identified	76.0	24.3
Divorce cases with issue(s) identified	38.9	12.4
Other family cases	**166.5**	**53.2**
Access and/or custody cases	24.8	7.9
Access and/or custody and support cases	34.7	11.1
Support cases	31.9	10.2
Other case types	67.9	21.7
Unknown case types	7.2	2.3

Notes: Includes only the jurisdictions that report data to the Civil Court Survey (CCS). Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Saskatchewan began reporting data in 2013/2014 including only cases before superior level court (Court of Queen's Bench) in the judicial districts of Regina and Saskatoon (cases before Provincial Court and the Registrar in Bankruptcy in those judicial districts are excluded). The Civil Court Survey is designed to collect more than one type of family issue associated with a case event. For example, when a case involves divorce, custody and access, each of these issues can be recorded by the survey. The methodology used to classify family cases in this table is based on all issues that have been identified in a case, over the length of the case. The following hierarchy in the classification has been applied in order to group cases by issue into mutually exclusive categories: (1) divorce, (2) child protection, (3) access and/or custody and support, (4) access and/or custody, (5) support. In general, divorce and child protection each represent the primary issue identified in a case (the first issue reported) and only a very small number of family cases report both of these issues. The issue of support may include child support and/or spousal support and unspecified support. The other issues recorded by the survey are: separation, guardianship, enforcement, property, parentage, adoption, civil protection, estate matters, constitutional/charter and other family. The collection of data is from administrative records stored in civil court automated information systems. Given that the data are derived from records originally kept for non-statistical purposes, complete survey information is not always available. For example, information related to issues, such as custody, access and support, may not always be available from the court information systems and, as such, may be under reported.
Source: Statistics Canada, Civil Court Survey, 2013/2014, Cansim table 259-0012.

Stability in the proportion of lone mothers

Lone-parent families are formed as a result of divorce or separation, death of a spouse or partner, or having a child outside of a union. In 2011, lone-mother families represented 13% of all census families, and lone-father families accounted for another 3.5%. From another perspective, in 2011, 79% of lone parents were women, while 21% were men. This 4 to 1 ratio of lone mothers to lone fathers has been relatively constant for the past fifty years.

Between 2006 and 2011, lone-mother families grew more slowly (+6.0%) than did lone-father families (+16%). As the share of couples with joint custody has risen, this increases the chance that a child of divorced or separated parents could be residing with the father on census day. In many cases, the non-resident parent is involved—physically, emotionally and/or financially—in the lives of his or her children, and the child may live with that parent part-time.

34. Sinha, M. 2014. "Parenting and child support after separation or divorce", *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-652-X.
35. Some support arrangements, if the arrangement is court-ordered or the agreement is registered with the court, may be enrolled with maintenance enforcement programs (MEPs). Similarly, as of March 31, 2014, 96% of support recipients enrolled in maintenance enforcement programs were women, according to the 2013/2014 Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs based on eight reporting jurisdictions: Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Excludes cases where the type of beneficiary or sex of the recipient is unknown, and excludes Maintenance Enforcement Program cases where the payor resides outside the jurisdiction.
36. The Civil Court Survey is designed to collect more than one type of family issue associated with a case event. For example, when a case involves divorce, custody and access, each of these issues can be recorded by the survey. The methodology used to classify family cases in this table is based on all issues that have been identified in a case, over the length of the case. The following hierarchy in the classification has been applied in order to group cases by issue into mutually exclusive categories: (1) divorce, (2) child protection, (3) access and/or custody and support, (4) access and/or custody, (5) support. In general, divorce and child protection each represent the primary issue identified in a case (the first issue reported) and only a very small number of family cases report both of these issues. The issue of support may include child support and/or spousal support and unspecified support. The other issues recorded by the survey are: separation, guardianship, enforcement, property, parentage, adoption, civil protection, estate matters, constitutional/charter and other family. The collection of data is from administrative records stored in civil court automated information systems. Given that the data are derived from records originally kept for non-statistical purposes, complete survey information is not always available. For example, information related to issues, such as custody, access and support, may not always be available from the court information systems and, as such, may be under reported.
37. The jurisdictions which reported data to the Civil Court Survey in 2013/2014 include Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan (Regina and Saskatoon only), Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
38. In total, about 42% of family cases (regardless of whether or not it was a divorce case) involved issues of access, custody and support.

Over the course of the past century, the pathways to lone parenthood have shifted for both women and men. In 2011, about half (49%) of lone mothers were divorced or separated,[39] 32% had never been legally married and one-fifth (18%) were widowed. Thirty years earlier, in 1981, a higher proportion of lone mothers were divorced or separated from a marriage (56%) or widowed (33%), and a lower proportion were never married (11%). For lone fathers, 56% were divorced or separated in 2011, 29% had never been legally married and 15% were widowed. In 1981, these proportions for lone fathers were 66%, 4.1% and 30%. This change in the marital status of lone parents reflects the dissolution of common-law unions for whom many partners may have been never legally married, as well as more births outside of marriage. Earlier in the 20th Century, the share of divorced and separated parents would have been much smaller with a corresponding larger share of widowed parents, given higher mortality rates for both women and men.[40]

Lone mothers were younger than lone fathers in 2011: the median ages were 46.4 years and 49.4 years, respectively. In 2011, never-married lone mothers had a median age that was more than a decade younger (36.0 years) than those who were divorced or separated (47.3 years) and half of the median age of widowed lone mothers (72.0 years). While lone fathers who were never married (40.7 years) and divorced or separated (50.3 years) were older than their female counterparts, widowed lone fathers (70.0 years) were younger than widowed lone mothers, likely a function of greater female life expectancy.

Among lone-mother families in 2011, just over half (59%) had one child at home, 29% had two children and 11% had three or more. For lone-father families, these proportions were 66%, 26% and 7.6%. A slightly higher proportion of lone-mother families than lone-father families had children all aged five and under in 2011 (12% of all lone-mother families compared with 9.3% of lone-father families).

While 8.5% of all women aged 15 and over were lone mothers in 2011, the share was about double for women who had an Aboriginal identity (17%). Specifically, among women with a single Aboriginal identity, 19% of First Nations, 16% of Inuit and 13% of Métis women were lone mothers.[41] Reflecting these higher proportions of lone mothers among the Aboriginal population, the proportions were also relatively high in the territories: Nunavut (15%), Northwest Territories (11%) and Yukon (10%). For men, 2.4% were lone fathers, and the proportion was higher for those with an Aboriginal identity, at 4.6%: Inuit (5.6%), First Nations (5.4%) and Métis (3.4%).

A slightly higher proportion of immigrant women were lone mothers (9.8%) in 2011 than non-immigrant women (8.1%), although this was lower for recent immigrant women who settled in Canada between 2006 and 2011 (6.9%). A smaller share of immigrant men, 2.3%, were lone parents compared with immigrant women, and the share was smaller still for recent immigrant men, 1.3%.

About 10% of visible minority women were lone parents in 2011 as were 8.1% of non-visible minority women, but the shares were larger for women who were Black (22%) and Latin American (14%). In comparison, 5.8% of South Asian women were lone parents, which could reflect a combination of cultural expectations, immigration patterns, as well as other possibilities.

Among lone-parent families, 63% of lone mothers were employed in 2014 as were 70% of lone fathers. This proportion was significantly higher for lone mothers than in 1976 (43%) and marginally higher for lone fathers (67%).[42] It has long been recognized that lone-parent families, particularly lone-mother families, face economic challenges. According to the 2011 NHS, the median after-tax income[43] of lone-mother families was $40,554 and for lone-father families it was $50,627 whereas for a couple with children the median after-tax income was $83,881. For families with children aged five and under, the median after-tax income was $74,137 for couples, $27,554 for lone-mother families and $40,404 for lone-father families.[44]

According to the 2011 NHS, the prevalence of low income[45] for lone-mother families was 34%, and for lone-father families it was 19%, increasing to nearly 6 in 10 (59%) for lone-mother families with children aged five and under, and to about 3 in 10 (28%) for lone-father families with children of the same age. In comparison, the prevalence of low income was 13% for couples with children aged five and under.[46]

39. Also includes lone parents who were married, spouse absent.
40. For example, even 50 years ago, in 1961, 61% of lone parents were widowed, 36% were divorced or separated and 2.7% were never married.
41. Other characteristics, such as age and area of residence, can affect the proportion of lone mothers. For example, among 15- to 24-year-old women, 13% of Aboriginal women living on-reserve were lone parents, more than six times higher than the 2.0% of non-Aboriginal women in this age group who lived elsewhere. In comparison, 7.6% of 15- to 24-year-old Aboriginal women living off reserve were lone parents.
42. Statistics Canada. *Table 282-0211 - Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by family type and family age composition, annual (persons unless otherwise noted)*, CANSIM (database).
43. After-tax income refers to total income from all sources minus federal, provincial and territorial taxes paid for 2010. The median income of a specified group of families is that amount which divides their income size distribution, ranked by size of income, into two halves. That is, the incomes of the first half of the families are below the median, while those of the second half are above the median. Median incomes of families are computed only with units having reported an income from this source.
44. Statistics Canada. 2013. "Selected Economic Family and Persons not in Economic Family Characteristics (55), Income Statistics in 2010 (4A) and Income Sources (16) for the Economic Families and Persons not in Economic Families Aged 15 Years and Over in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2011 National Household Survey", *2011 National Household Survey: Data tables*, Catalogue no. 99-014-X2011033.
45. For the 2011 NHS, low-income statistics are presented based on the after-tax low-income measure (LIM-AT).
46. Statistics Canada. 2013. "Selected Demographic, Sociocultural, Education and Labour Characteristics (322), Sex (3) and Income Status in 2010 (6) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2011 National Household Survey", *2011 National Household Survey: Data tables*, Catalogue no. 99-014-X2011043.

Box 2
Home ownership and living in single-detached house more common for married women than other women

Women and men are more likely to be home-owners than renters and are also most likely to live in single-detached houses, however, this can vary by living arrangement. Overall, in 2011, about three-quarters of both women (74%) and men (75%) lived in a home that was owned by a household member while one-quarter were renters (26% of women and 24% of men).[1] A smaller proportion, but still the majority—6 in 10 women (60%) and men (62%)—lived in a single, detached house and close to 3 in 10 (27% of women and 26% of men) lived in apartments.[2]

Married spouses had the highest proportion of home ownership (86% each for women and men), and for common-law partners, it was 69% each for women and men. Women and men who were married spouses also had the highest proportion of living in single-detached houses, 71%, dropping to 58% for both female and male common-law partners.

In 2011, among lone parents, 56% of women lived in a home that was owned by a household member as did 67% of lone fathers. About 45% of lone mothers lived in a single-detached house and an additional 34% lived in an apartment. For lone fathers, 59% lived in a single-detached house and 27% lived in an apartment.

Among the population who lived alone in 2011, 51% of women and 48% of men lived in a home that they owned. Women who lived alone were more likely to live in an apartment (57%) than a single-detached house (31%). For men living alone, these proportions were 55% and 35%, respectively.

When living only with non-relatives, 47% each of women and men lived in an apartment in 2011 and 39% of each lived in a single-detached house. For both women who lived alone and those who lived only with non-relatives, the proportion living in an apartment peaked in their early twenties, at 83% and 63%, respectively. For men with these living arrangements, the proportions living in an apartment were also highest for those in their early twenties, that is, 73% and 57%, respectively.

Distribution (percent) of structural dwellings and tenure by living arrangements of women aged 15 and over, Canada, 2011

		In a couple							
Housing characteristic	All living arrangements	Total	With married spouse	With common-law partner	Lone parents	As children	With relatives[1]	With non-relatives only	Alone
	percent								
Total structural dwellings	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Single-detached house	59.8	68.7	71.2	58.4	45.5	69.2	55.8	39.1	30.8
Apartment	27.2	19.5	17.3	28.3	34.0	17.6	29.6	47.2	57.4
Other house[2]	11.7	10.6	10.4	11.5	19.2	12.5	13.8	12.4	10.4
Mobile home or movable dwelling	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.8	1.3	0.7	0.8	1.3	1.4
Total tenure	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Owned by a household member	73.8	82.4	85.7	69.0	55.6	81.6	72.2	47.4	50.7
Rented	25.7	17.2	14.0	30.0	43.1	17.7	26.7	52.4	49.1
Band housing	0.5	0.4	0.3	1.0	1.4	0.7	1.2	0.2	0.2

1. Non-relatives may be present.
2. Includes row houses, semi-detached houses or other single-attached houses.

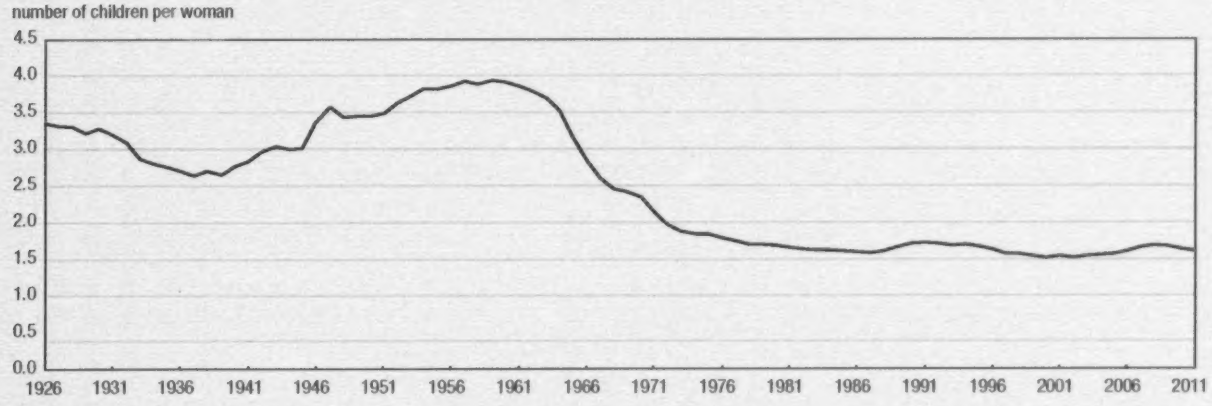
Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011 and National Household Survey, 2011.

1. A small proportion of women and men aged 15 and over (0.5%) lived in band housing (on an Indian reserve or settlement).
2. Other types of dwellings including row houses, semi-detached houses or other single-attached houses.

Forty years of below-replacement fertility

Fertility patterns have many implications for the pace of population growth, the age structure of a population, as well as family and household composition. In 2011, the total fertility rate,[47] or the average number of children per woman, was 1.61, slightly higher than the record low of 1.51 children per woman about a decade earlier (Chart 5). Since 1972, fertility has been below the replacement level[48] of 2.1, meaning that couples are not having enough children to replace themselves. Historically, women had relatively larger families as it was difficult to control either the timing or the number of births. At the turn of the 20th Century, women were having close to five children on average; however, it was already on the decline, as society was becoming more urbanized and more dependent on employment income and as childrearing was becoming relatively more expensive.

Chart 5
Total fertility rate (number of children per woman), Canada, 1926 to 2011



Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, Population Estimates Program.

During the 1920s and throughout the 1930s—a period of uncertainty associated with World War I and II as well as the Great Depression—fertility levels continued to fall and by 1937, the total fertility rate was 2.64 children per woman. From 1946 to 1965, Canada experienced a baby boom, owing to a number of factors including a strong post-war economy, high marriage rates and younger ages at marriage and childbearing, in addition to women having more children overall. The baby boom peaked in 1959 with a total fertility rate of 3.94 children per woman.

Societal and legislative changes beginning in the 1960s contributed to a rapid fall in fertility levels during the late 1960s. Among the changes were the reduced influence of religion on childbearing decisions, improved contraception and the increased pursuit of higher education and participation of women in the paid labour force. Changes to the divorce legislation beginning in 1968 allowed for easier access to divorce for women and men who wanted to formally end their marriages.

Despite the overall low fertility for the nation as a whole, there is variation across the country. In 2011, the highest total fertility rate in Canada was found in Nunavut—almost three children per woman (2.97)—owing to its large Aboriginal population that has higher overall fertility (Table 8). Among the provinces, Saskatchewan had the highest total fertility rate, at 1.99 children per woman in 2011 and British Columbia had the lowest, at 1.42 children per woman.

47. Refers to the number of children that a woman would have over the course of her reproductive life if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates observed in a particular calendar year. It is based on a compilation of the fertility experiences of many different cohorts of women in a given year.
48. Refers to the number of children per woman necessary for the population to replace itself taking into account mortality between birth and age 15, and in the absence of migration.

Table 8
Total fertility rate (number of children per woman), births and distribution of births by age of mother, Canada, provinces and territories, 2011

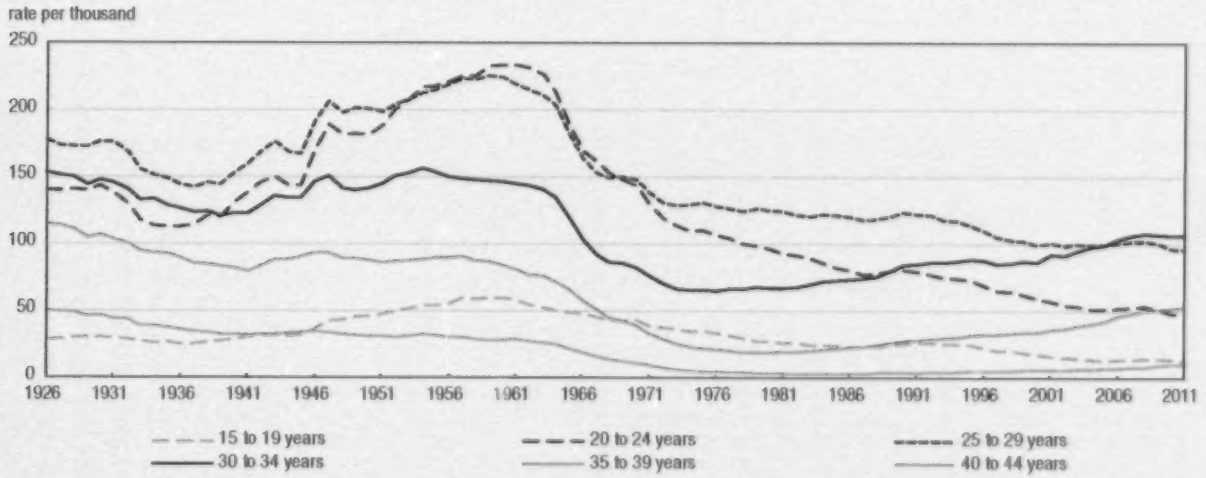
Region of residence	Total fertility rate	Births	Distribution of births by age of mother					
			Total	Less than 20 years	20 to 24 years	25 to 29 years	30 to 34 years	35 years and over
	children per woman	thousands	percent					
Canada	**1.61**	**377.6**	**100.0**	**3.6**	**14.2**	**30.1**	**32.9**	**19.2**
Newfoundland and Labrador	1.45	4.5	100.0	5.6	18.4	29.8	30.3	15.9
Prince Edward Island	1.62	1.4	100.0	5.8	17.4	30.3	32.1	14.4
Nova Scotia	1.47	8.9	100.0	5.7	18.8	28.9	30.2	16.4
New Brunswick	1.54	7.1	100.0	6.7	21.2	32.1	27.6	12.4
Quebec	1.69	88.6	100.0	2.5	13.7	32.7	33.8	17.4
Ontario	1.52	140.1	100.0	3.0	12.2	28.0	34.5	22.2
Manitoba	1.86	15.6	100.0	8.0	20.3	30.1	27.5	14.1
Saskatchewan	1.99	14.3	100.0	8.1	20.4	33.9	26.5	11.1
Alberta	1.81	51.0	100.0	4.0	15.6	32.1	31.5	16.8
British Columbia	1.42	44.1	100.0	2.6	12.3	28.1	33.9	23.1
Yukon	1.73	0.4	100.0	4.2	13.9	27.4	28.8	25.8
Northwest Territories	1.97	0.7	100.0	8.1	23.8	25.7	25.5	17.0
Nunavut	2.97	0.8	100.0	20.8	34.1	24.6	13.4	7.2

Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, Population Estimates Program.

Motherhood shifting to older ages

The decrease in the total fertility rate in Canada over the past 50 years is generally the result of reductions in the age-specific fertility rates for women under age 30, despite the higher fertility rates of those aged 30 and over. Specifically, the higher fertility rate for women aged 30 to 34 (106 births per 1,000 women) than for women aged 25 to 29 (95) in 2011 began in 2005 and the gap between these two age groups has continued to grow (Chart 6). While the fertility rate for women in their late twenties has been falling for about the past five decades, the fertility rate of 30- to 34-year-olds has been increasing since the mid-1970s. Relatively high fertility for women in their early thirties is not a new trend as the fertility rate for this age group was even higher between 1926 and 1965 than it was in 2011.[49] In the past, higher fertility during women's thirties would more likely have been due to either less effective contraception or the desire for larger families while today it is more the result of delayed fertility.

Chart 6
Fertility rate (per thousand) by age group, Canada, 1926 to 2011



Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1926 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, Population Estimates Program.

49. Milan, A. 2013. "Fertility: Overview, 2009 to 2011", *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*, Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 91-209-X.

In 2011, the fertility rate for women aged 35 to 39 (52 births per 1,000 women) exceeded that of women aged 20 to 24 (46), a pattern that began in 2010. The rate for women in their late thirties has been trending upward since the early 1980s; but it is still lower than the 1926 fertility rate (115). The fertility rate for women in their early twenties peaked in the early 1960s, has since fallen and as of 2011, was at a record low.

The gap between one of the older age groups of women in their reproductive years, aged 40 to 44 (10 births per 1,000 women) and teens aged 15 to 19 (13) also nearly converged in 2011 as the result of a decline in the fertility rate for teens and an increase in the rate for women in their early forties. Throughout the late 1940s to the 1960s, the fertility rate for young women aged 15 to 19 was relatively high, with the 1959 rate over 4.5 times more than the 2011 rate. The 1980s to the present, however, has been characterized by the lowest fertility rates for young women in the data observed since 1926. The 2011 fertility rate of women in their early forties was the highest rate since 1970, yet it was about one-fifth the 1926 rate for this age group.

The age at which women have their first child has varied over time. The average age of mothers at first birth was about 24 years during the 1950s to mid-1970s, increasing since then to 28.5 years in 2011.[50] Across Canada, the youngest average age for first-time mothers in 2011 was in Nunavut (22.1 years) and the oldest was in British Columbia (29.5 years). Women are not only delaying their first birth compared with several decades ago, they are also completing their childbearing relatively quickly once they begin, with the average age of women at second- and higher-order births currently all in their early thirties. At the second birth, the average age of women was 30.9 years in 2011, at the third birth it was 32.0 years, at the fourth birth it was 32.6 years and for a fifth- or higher-order birth, it was 33.9 years. In 2011, the gap between the average age at first birth and fifth birth or higher was 5.4 years. In comparison, in 1979, the gap was much wider, at nearly 10 years: 24.8 years for the average age at first birth and 34.1 years for the fifth birth or higher.[51]

About one-fifth (19%) of births in 2011 were to women aged 35 and older, close to four times the 1981 proportion (4.9%). In 2011, the share of births to women in their late thirties or older was largest in Yukon (26%), British Columbia (23%) and Ontario (22%). In contrast, 3.6% of all births in Canada in 2011 were to teen mothers, which has been 5% or less since 2000. Among the provinces and territories, more than one-fifth (21%) of all births in Nunavut in 2011 were to teen mothers, followed by relatively large shares in the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan (8.1% each) and Manitoba (8.0%), while the smallest shares were found in Ontario (3.0%), British Columbia (2.6%) and Quebec (2.5%).

Nearly 4 in 10 young women live in the parental home

A significant proportion of young women lived with their parents in 2011. Of the 2.2 million young women aged 20 to 29 in 2011, 38% lived in the parental home,[52] either because they never left it or because they returned home after living elsewhere.[53] This proportion was up marginally from 2006 (37%) but it was particularly higher than in preceding decades: 26% in 1991 and 21% in 1981.

The proportion of women in their twenties living in the parental home was lower than for men (47% in 2011),[54] perhaps because women tend to form unions and establish independent households at younger ages than men. The share of young women living with parents was larger for those in their early twenties compared with those in their late twenties, although for much of the past several decades it has been increasing for both age groups. Among young women aged 20 to 24, 55% lived in the parental home, up from 33% in 1981. For 25- to 29-year-old women, one-fifth (21%) lived with their parents in 2011, more than double the 7.8% share in 1981. In 2011, 63% of young men in their early twenties lived in the parental home, as did 30% of those in their late twenties; in 1981, these proportions were 50% and 15%, respectively.

Young women and men in their twenties may remain in or return to the parental home for many different reasons.[55] Exchanges of support could flow both to and from the parent and child, although the common perception is that it is more advantageous to the adult children. Parents may provide a source of emotional or economic support for young adults who are at home because they are pursuing higher education, experiencing difficulty finding employment or other financial challenges, or as the result of cultural expectations or relationship dissolution.

In 2011, the majority (95%) of young women in the parental home had never been legally married, although some of these women may have experienced the dissolution of a common-law union. An additional 2.2% of young women were accompanied in the home by their married spouse or common-law partner. The remaining 2.6% of young women in

50. Although median age is often used in this chapter for conjugal status and other living arrangements of women and men in 2011, historical analysis of age at marriage and childbearing more commonly uses average or mean age at these events.
51. Milan, A. 2013. "Fertility: Overview, 2009 to 2011", *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 91-209-X.
52. Refers to daughters in an economic family.
53. As per the instructions on the census questionnaire, students who return to live with their parents during the year should be included at their parent's address, even if they live elsewhere while attending school or working at a summer job.
54. Milan, A. and N. Bohnert. 2012. "Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29", *Census in Brief*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-312-X.
55. For more information, see Beaupré, P., P. Turcotte and A. Milan. 2006. "Junior comes back home: Trends and predictors of returning to the parental home", *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

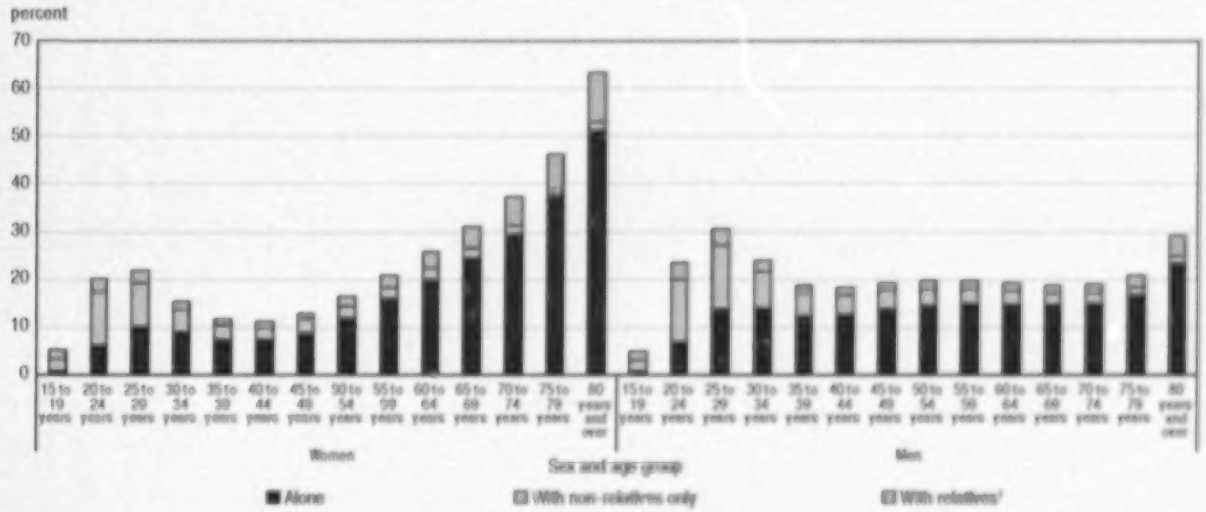
the parental home were widowed, divorced, separated or married with an absent spouse. The share of young women in their late twenties who were previously married or had a current spouse or partner was larger than for those in their early twenties. Among 25- to 29-year-old women in the parental home, 5.8% had been previously married or had an absent spouse and 4.8% were in the home with a spouse or partner, compared with 1.3% and 1.2%, respectively, for women aged 20 to 24.

Most women not in families live alone

Based on the 2011 Census, one-fifth of both women and men aged 15 and over (21% of women and 20% of men) did not live in census families with a spouse, partner, children or parents. In total, more than 2.9 million women in 2011, lived either alone, with non-relatives only—that is, as roommates, lodgers or boarders—or with relatives.

Living outside of a family was fairly common among women and men in their late twenties, when 22% of women and 31% of men in this age group did so in 2011 (Chart 7). During this stage of the life course, young adults may be attending school, establishing their economic independence, as well as pursuing other personal goals. Co-residing with others outside of their families may provide a strategy for young adults to save money while maintaining companionship.

Chart 7
Proportion (percent) of women and men aged 15 and over who live alone, with non-relatives only or with relatives by age group, Canada, 2011



1. Non-relatives may be present.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

For women, the proportion living outside of a family was low during their late thirties and early forties, at less than 12% in 2011, a period when many women are raising their children. It then increased for each age group from the mid-forties and older, primarily as larger shares of women live alone. In contrast to the 'check mark' pattern in the proportions for women by age, there was a relatively long period of stability in the proportion of men living outside of families. About one in five men lived outside of families between their late thirties and their late seventies.

Most people who were not living with family members lived alone (14% of women and 13% of men in 2011), up from 11% of women and 7.7% of men, respectively, in 1981. In 2011, among people aged 20 to 54, a lower proportion of women than men lived alone, for example, at age 40 to 44, 7.3% of women and 13% of men lived alone. In contrast, the share of lone parents at this age was 14% for women and 3.9% for men. By their mid-to-late fifties, more women than men lived alone, with the gap increasing throughout the senior years. By age 65 to 69, 24% of women and 15% of men lived alone and at age 80 and over, 51% of women and 23% of men lived alone. The higher life expectancy of women compared with men largely explains the sex differential at older ages. Consequently, the median age of women living alone was 61.9 years in 2011 and for men it was 50.4 years.

Smaller shares of women who were Aboriginal (11%), belonged to a visible minority group (6.6%) or were an immigrant (11%) lived alone in 2011 in comparison to women who did not have these characteristics (14%, 16% and 15%, respectively). Among immigrant women who arrived in Canada between 2006 and 2011, 4.4% lived alone in 2011.

There were variations across the country in the share of women living alone. In many CMAs, for example, the proportion of women who lived alone in 2011 was well above the national average (14%), and reached 21% in several CMAs in the province of Quebec: Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières and Québec. Generally, CMAs with larger shares of women also had older populations, and given the greater longevity of women, this means that they may be more likely to live on their own at older ages. Additionally, in some regions, the share was below that of Canada as a whole, for example, 9.6% of women in the Northwest Territories and 5.8% in Nunavut lived alone, which may be at least partially related to a lack of housing in the North,[56] as well as cultural expectations, among other possibilities. Overall, in rural areas of the country, women were less likely to live alone (9.2%) in 2011 than those who lived elsewhere (15%).

Even though many women live outside of a family, including those who live alone, they might still be part of a couple without actually sharing a dwelling, a group referred to as living apart together (LAT) couples. According to the 2011 GSS, 7.5% of women aged 20 and over were LATs, with little difference between women and men.[57,58] In 2011, the share of LATs peaked at age 20 to 34, at about 18% of women. At age 35 to 59, 4.6% of women were in LAT relationships and at age 60 and over, the proportion was 1.8%. For both sexes combined, compared with a decade earlier, there were slight declines for each age group under age 60 and a marginal increase for those aged 60 and over. Although the reasons for living in a LAT relationship vary, the desire for independence was especially prevalent for women aged 60 and over, with 46% of women in this age group reporting that maintaining their independence as their reason for being in a LAT couple, compared with 30% of men in this age group.

56. For example, according to *An analysis of the housing needs in Nunavut: Nunavut Housing Needs Survey 2009/2010*, about 35% of homes in Nunavut were crowded. A working paper prepared by Income Statistics Division, Statistics Canada for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, October, 2010.
57. Turcotte, M. 2013. "Living apart together". *Insights on Canadian Society*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X, March.
58. There was also no statistically significant difference in the share of female LATs in 2011 compared with 2001, although the overall share for men was slightly lower.